People Don't Change People

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by WordsAblaze

Summary

“Will Graham.”

At the sound of his full name, Will stiffens. “Hello, Doctor Lecter,” he replies slowly.

His voice is quiet, but thick, and filled with an unexpected dismay; Hannibal has the abrupt urge to dissect his vocal cords and determine which point of stress caused such a thing. Instead, he glances over Will, taking note of his messy, sweat-soaked curls and the overlapping wrinkles in his jumpsuit.

“Something has happened since my last visit,” he concludes.

Notes

BSHCI arc Will for today because it's such a vibe,,,

day 20 prompts used: blanket / "you will regret touching them"

See the end of the work for more notes

Hannibal frowns when Will doesn't acknowledge his presence.

He frowns further when he notices the way Will is shaking underneath the low quality excuse of a blanket wrapped tightly around him, clearly in some sort of distress that, most infuriatingly, is not of his own making.

"Will?"

Nothing.

Hannibal steps closer, and closer again, until he is all but pressed against the bars of the cell. He takes a moment to breathe in the awful scent of fear and anger and poorly-washed linens before trying again: "Will Graham."

At the sound of his full name, Will stiffens, pausing for a moment before turning and slowly pulling himself into a seated position, though facing the wall opposite him rather than Hannibal. "Hello, Doctor Lecter," he replies slowly.

His voice is quiet, but thick, and filled with an unexpected dismay; Hannibal has the abrupt urge to dissect his vocal cords and determine which point of stress caused such a thing. Instead, he glances over Will, taking note of his messy, sweat-soaked curls and the overlapping wrinkles in his jumpsuit. "Something has happened since my last visit," he concludes.

Will chuckles bitterly. "I know what you did to me. I—I remember."

For a moment, Hannibal—very genuinely and for the first time in a very long time—doubts his methods. But he quickly quells that unproductive doubt and raises an eyebrow that Will can't see but was probably expecting. "And what is it exactly that you believe you remember me having done?"

Will lets his face fall forwards against his palms, then slowly shifts so his hands travel behind his head, his fingers interlocking just above the nape of his neck. His eyes are squeezed shut, and he breathes heavily for several moments before sharply standing and stalking over to the cell bars, coming to a stop just opposite Hannibal.

Now no more than an inch away, Hannibal can see the redness of his sclerae, the bags under his eyes, and the pallor shade of his skin that alludes to nothing but nausea and nightmares. "You're unwell," Hannibal murmurs.

"You can't expect me to believe you care," Will scoffs, his nostrils flaring as his eyes scan Hannibal's face in return, clearly finding something they don't like because he then steps back, shaking his head. "Why do you keep coming here, Hannibal?"

"You're my friend, Will."

Will scoffs. "The light of friendship is not the sort typically found in your therapy sessions."

Hannibal frowns for the third time, this time understanding what exactly it is Will remembers. He doesn't make the mistake of doubting his methods this time, but that doesn't mean he isn't desperately curious to know how such deeply— *forcefully* —suppressed memories could have so suddenly emerged.

"And have you encountered such illuminating therapeutic light again, during your stay here?"

"It was almost… intoxicating this time around," Will says blankly, but his fingers are rapidly tapping against his thighs and it doesn't take a professional to conclude the experience has clearly affected him more than he wishes to admit.

"I care for you a great deal, Will," Hannibal says carefully, aware of the cameras that Will had none too subtly pointed out to him during one of his previous visits, "and it pains me to see you so exhausted. Tell me, have you been able to sleep at all?"

For a moment, Hannibal thinks Will won't answer. But he holds Hannibal's gaze and eventually shrugs. "It's difficult to distinguish between sleeping and waking. I'm afraid I can't accurately answer that."

With his suspicions confirmed that Frederick has been administering an unlicensed and, worse, most certainly toxic combination of drugs in his attempt to prove himself, Hannibal nods, and offers Will a small smile. "I appreciate your honesty, Will."

A strange mixture of relief and rage flickers across Will's expression and, even more strangely, he steps forwards until the metal of the bars presses against his face, something cold in his shadowed eyes. "I would appreciate yours in return, Doctor Lecter."

Hannibal stares at him for what must be a moment too long because Will smirks and retreats back to his appalling excuse of a cot, where he all but collapses like an untethered puppet, wrapping the blanket around his shoulders once more. "Are you truly prepared to be honest with me?" he asks coolly.

"As long as you are prepared to continue your honesty with me," Hannibal replies. *And not with Frederick Chilton,* goes unsaid.

Will shivers but hums in acknowledgement before turning to face the wall, curling himself into a small shape that brings back memories of long-gone winter struggles and digs into Hannibal's chest like skewers into meat. He itches to remedy the situation but their conversation is clearly over and, although gruelling to accept, it's clear Will currently needs rest more than he needs his psychiatrist. Hannibal casts one last glance over Will's shaking form before making his way back to Frederick's office, his features hardening as he catches said eavesdropper's scowl.

"I assure you, Mr Graham has been sleeping soundly under my supervision. He is well on his way to recovery and, in fact, I have managed to reach memories that were previously buried in his mind."

"You will regret touching them," Hannibal replies bluntly, because as tempting and fascinating as he knows it is to explore the mind of Will Graham, he cannot forgive someone

so careless and selfish and ignorant of their patient's best interest having done so.

It takes Frederick a moment to catch up, at which point he laughs. "What, his memories? No, no, they promise to uncover the truth of any… unorthodox therapy he may have received that drove him to commit such a… gruesome crime."

As much as Hannibal wants to laugh at Frederick's definition of a gruesome crime—the thought of how he would react when faced with actual gore is almost amusing enough to excuse his ignorant weakness—he refrains, knowing that any tension between them would place Will further out of his reach.

"Why is there no mirror in his cell?" Hannibal tangents, reining in his distaste.

Again, irritatingly, Frederick scrambles to keep up with the conversation. "His mirror? Well, he, uh, smashed it. He ground each shard into fragments and…"

"And?" Hannibal demands impatiently.

"He never finishes his food, you see. And almost always leaves his drinks untouched. The orderlies have gotten used to finishing his portions rather than letting the food go to waste and I confess I should have put a stop to that for several reasons but—"

"Frederick. What happened to the mirror?" Hannibal interrupts, even though he's already formed an image of what must have happened.

Frederick looks offended at having been interrupted, but relents easily. "He'd mixed some of it into his leftovers before we'd gotten round to clearing it away. One of the orderlies drank his water without noticing and…"

Will had, for all intents and purposes, torn his throat apart from inside out, and left nobody to blame but the victim's own unprofessionalism, Hannibal surmises. He swallows down his satisfaction and takes his leave, ignoring Frederick calling after him; he may well take a leaf out of Will's book and fashion a similar fate for the man when the time is right.

For now, he has a promise to *selectively* uphold.

who needs mirrors when you can have murder, right?

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